

TRANSMITTAL LETTER TO THE UNITED STATES
 DESIGNATED/ELECTED OFFICE (DO/EO/US)
 CONCERNING A FILING UNDER 35 U.S.C. 371

Attorney's Docket Number

01165.0782

U.S. Application No.

09/530447 pct &

International Application. No. PCT/JP98/04944	International Filing Date October 30, 1998	Priority Date Claimed October 31, 1997
--	---	---

Title of Invention: AIR BAG

Applicant(s) For DO/EO/US: Yoshinori KAMI and Hideaki ISHII

Applicant herewith submits to the United States Designated/Elected Office (DO/EO/US)
 the following items and other information:

1. [X] This is a FIRST submission of items concerning a filing under 35 U.S.C. 371.
2. [] This is a SECOND or SUBSEQUENT submission of items concerning a filing under 35 U.S.C. 371.
3. [] This express request to begin national examination procedures (35 U.S.C. 371(f)) at any time rather than delay examination until the expiration of the applicable time limit set in 35 U.S.C. 371(b) and PCT Articles 22 and 39(1).
4. [X] A proper Demand for International Preliminary Examination was made by the 19th month from the earliest claimed priority date.
5. [X] A copy of the International Application as filed (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(2))
 - a. [] is transmitted herewith (required only if not transmitted by the International Bureau).
 - b. [X] has been transmitted by the International Bureau.
 - c. [] is not required, as the application was filed in the United States Receiving Office (RO/US).
6. [X] A translation of the International Application into English (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(2)).
7. [] Amendments to the claims of the International Application under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(3)).
 - a. [] are transmitted herewith (required only if not transmitted by the International Bureau).
 - b. [] have been transmitted by the International Bureau.
 - c. [] have not been made; however, the time limit for making such amendments has NOT expired.
 - d. [X] have not been made and will not be made.
8. [] A translation of the amendments to the claims under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(3)).
9. [X] An oath or declaration of the inventor(s) (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(4)).
10. [] A translation of the annexes to the International Preliminary Examination Report under PCT Article 36 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(5)).

Items 11. to 16. below concern other document(s) or information included:

11. [X] An Information Disclosure Statement under 37 CFR 1.97 and 1.98.
12. [X] An assignment document for recording. A separate cover sheet in compliance with 37 CFR 3.28 and 3.31 is included.
13. [] A FIRST preliminary amendment.
14. [] A SECOND or SUBSEQUENT preliminary amendment.
15. [] A substitute specification.
16. [] A change of power of attorney and/or address letter.
16. [] Other items or information:
 - a. [] Verified Small Entity Statement.
 - b. [] Copy of Notification of Missing Requirements.

09/530447

PCT/JP98/04944

01165.0782

422 Rec'd PCT/PTO 28 APR 2000

17. [X] The following fees are submitted:

CALCULATIONS

Basic National Fee (37 CFR 1.492(a)(1)-(5)):

Search Report has been prepared by the EPO or JPO.....\$840.00

International preliminary examination fee paid to

USPTO (37 CFR 1.482).....\$670.00

No international preliminary examination fee paid to

USPTO (37 CFR 1.482) but international search fee

paid to USPTO (37 CFR 1.445(a)(2)).....\$690.00

Neither international preliminary examination fee

(37 CFR 1.482) nor international search fee

(37 CFR 1.445(a)(2)) paid to USPTO.....\$970.00

International preliminary examination fee paid to USPTO

(37 CFR 1.482) and all claims satisfied provisions

of PCT Article 33(1)-(4).....\$ 96.00

ENTER APPROPRIATE BASIC FEE AMOUNT = \$840.00

Surcharge of \$130.00 for furnishing the oath or declaration later than

[] 20 [] 30 months from the earliest claimed priority date

(37 CFR 1.492(e)).

\$

Claims	Number Filed	Number Extra	Rate	
Total Claims	11-20=		X \$18.00	\$
Independent Claims	2 - 3=		X \$78.00	\$
Multiple dependent claim(s) (if applicable)			+\$260.00	\$260.00

TOTAL OF ABOVE CALCULATIONS = \$

Reduction by 1/2 for filing by small entity, if applicable. Verified

Small Entity statement must also be filed. (Note 37 CFR 1.9, 1.27, 1.28)

\$

SUBTOTAL = \$1100.00

Processing fee of \$130.00 for furnishing the English translation later

than [] 20 [] 30 months from the earliest claimed priority date

(37 CFR 1.492(f)).

+

\$

TOTAL NATIONAL FEE = \$1100.00

Fee for recording the enclosed assignment (37 CFR 1.21(h)). The

assignment must be accompanied by an appropriate cover sheet

(37 CFR 3.28, 3.31).

\$40.00 per property + \$ 40.00

TOTAL FEES ENCLOSED = \$1140.00

Amount to be

refunded \$

charged \$

a. [X] A check in the amount of \$ 1140.00 to cover the above fees is enclosed.

b. [] Please charge my Deposit Account No. _____ in the amount of

\$

to cover the above fees. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.

c. [X] The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required, or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 06-0916. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any other fees due under 37 C.F.R. §1.16 or §1.17 during the pendency of this application to our Deposit Account No. 06-0916.

SEND ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO:

Finnegan, Henderson, Farabow

Garrett & Dunner, L.L.P.

1300 I Street, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20005-3315

EFC/FPD/dvz

Ernest F Chapman

Reg. No. 25,961

Submitted: April 28, 2000

2 / PART

09/530447
422 Rec'd PCT/PTO 28 APR 2000
ASK-F912/PCT-US,EP

- 1 -

AIR BAG

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

5 The present invention relates to an air bag for the protection of vehicle occupants upon the collision of a vehicle, by preventing the car occupants from secondarily colliding with an interior structure of the vehicle.

PRIOR ART

10 Recently, air bags have been increasingly mounted to various transportation means, and especially to automobiles for the purpose of protecting occupants thereof.

15 The air bag is usually housed in a narrow space such as an interior space of a steering wheel or an instrument panel. Nowadays, the steering wheel is designed to have a larger opening so that a speedometer or other instruments is easily visible, which, however, strongly requires that the air bag has a volume as small as possible to be housed in such a steering wheel.

20 It is important that a woven fabric for an air bag has an excellent mechanical property and is durable against the deployment of the air bag caused by a sudden expansion of a gas and a good foldability so that the air bag is foldable as compact as possible to be housed in a mounting case. Efforts to obtain such an air bag
25 excellent in mechanical performance and having a compact volume, are continuing.

30 A prior art air bag is generally prepared from a woven fabric composed of polyamide type yarns to have a weave density in a range from 24 to 32 ends/2.54 cm if a total yarn fineness is 933 decitex or in a range from 46 to 55 ends/2.54 cm if a total yarn fineness is 467 decitex, which fabric is then coated with a synthetic rubber such as chloroprene rubber or silicone rubber and sewn together to form the air bag.

35 The coated fabric, however, is thick and heavy and, in addition, has a high rigidity, whereby the air bag formed of such a fabric may injure a vehicle occupant

when an air bag device operates to deploy and inflate the air bag. There are reports that this is particularly dangerous when the vehicle occupant is an infant.

5 The air bag device is usually mounted to a central region of a steering wheel for a driver's seat and to an inner wall of an instrument panel for a passenger's seat. If the air bag is heavy in weight, it is necessary to strengthen a mount thereof so that the mount can bear the weight.

10 Also, if the woven fabric for the air bag has a large thickness and a high rigidity, the volume of the folded air bag becomes larger to need a larger space therefor.

15 To eliminate such drawbacks, woven fabrics having no resinous coating have recently been used. Alternatively, some air bags use a woven fabric composed of thinner yarns such as one having a fineness of 350 decitex or 233 decitex. The air bags obtained from such woven fabrics, however, are insufficient for the reduction of
20 the fabric thickness and weight, and therefore there is still a strong desire for obtaining a lighter and more pliable fabric.

Under these circumstances, United States Patent No. 5,533,755 proposes an inflatable protective cushion
25 (air bag) using a woven fabric composed of yarns having a fineness less than 467 decitex. An air cushion is disclosed as Example 1 thereof formed of a woven fabric composed of nylon yarns of 50 decitex which is compacted through a special scour and then calendered. While the
30 fabric of this kind certainly has a much smaller fabric thickness and weight relative to the prior art woven fabric, usually the tensile strength thereof is also reduced to the same extent. Accordingly, there is a risk in that the air bag is not durable against stress and/or
35 an inner pressure generated upon inflation and deployment of the air bag unless it is converted to a specially strengthened fabric through a compaction treatment or a

calendering as disclosed in the above-mentioned United States Patent. The United States Patent also proposes, in addition to the strengthening of the fabric described above, the improvement in a cut shape and a position of seams of the air bag fabric. For example, it is usual in the conventional air bag for a driver's seat that two circular pieces of about 70 cm diameter are cut from the fabric and sewn together along the periphery thereof. Contrarily, according to the United States Patent, it is proposed that a square piece of fabric is folded so that four corners are located at a center of the fabric piece and edges of adjacent folded flap portions are sewn together to form the air bag. By doing so, a tensile strength of the air bag is improved because no seam is present in a region in which the maximum stress might generate upon the inflation of the air bag. While this proposal is certainly effective for increasing a resistance to pressure of the air bag, it is apparent that the air bag is of a square shape like a cushion, which is defective because of the presence of corners as well as the difficulty of automating the sewing operation.

DISCLOSURE OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed to an air bag free from the above-mentioned problems, which is light in weight and is compact to be housed in an air bag case, while having properties satisfying the necessary and sufficient conditions upon the actuation of air bag as well as being durable against long term aging.

As stated above, to achieve the weight reduction and compactness which are essential requisites for an air bag, in place of a woven fabric composed of yarn having a fineness level of 467 decitex order which has typically been used, trials for adopting a woven fabric composed of yarns having a fineness of 350 decitex have been carried out by some manufacturers of air bags. However, the fabric and the air bag resulted from thinner yarns are

insufficient in fabric thickness and weight. For instance, a typical woven fabric used which is composed of nylon 66 yarns of 467 decitex to have a weave density of 53 ends/2.54 cm has a fabric thickness of 0.32 mm and a basis weight of 204 g/m², while another woven fabric composed of nylon 66 yarns of 350 decitex to have a weave density of 60 ends/2.54 cm has a fabric thickness of 0.28 mm and a basis weight of 170 g/m², which means that even if the yarn fineness decreases from 467 decitex to 350 decitex, the reduction of the fabric thickness is at most about 13% and that of the weight is about 17%. The air bag for a driver's seat formed of such a fabric has a weight exceeding about 200g and a thickness in a folded state exceeding about 20 mm.

The present invention has been based on a view that for the purpose of drastically reducing weight and volume of an air bag, it is necessary to decrease the basis weight and thickness of a woven fabric used therefor by about 20%, preferably by 30% or more.

To achieve the above-mentioned object of the present invention, the present inventors have paid attention to a dynamic load applied to the air bag at each of the operating stages and found that the tenacity of the air bag; i.e., the performance thereof durable against dynamic stress relies not only on a mechanical strength of a fabric forming the air bag but that the amount of a tensile work at break of the fabric forming the air bag is also an extremely important factor.

According to one aspect of the present invention, an air bag formed of two woven fabrics interwoven with each other to be a bag-shaped body, each composed of polyamide type fiber yarns containing copper compounds at 30 to 200 ppm estimated in terms of copper is provided, wherein the fabric is structured so that a product of a total fineness of warp or weft of the fabric multiplied by a weave density of the fabric is not more than 16000 decitex·ends/2.54 cm, a load at a 15% tensile

elongation is in a range from 3 to 35N%/2.54 cm, and a tensile work at break is in a range from 7000 to 30000N%/2.54 cm. According to another aspect of the present invention, an air bag formed of a woven fabric composed of polyamide type fiber yarns containing copper compounds at 30 to 200 ppm, estimated in term of copper, is provided, wherein the fabric has a product of a total fineness of warp or weft of the fabric multiplied by a weave density of the fabric of not more than 16000 decitex·ends/2.54 cm, a load at a 15% elongation in a range from 3 to 35N%/2.54 cm, and a tensile work at break in a range from 7000 to 30000N%/2.54 cm, and wherein the fabric is sewn or bonded to have a three-dimensional contour.

The present invention will be described in more detail below.

Air bags according to the present invention are those formed of two woven fabric pieces, each composed of polyamide type synthetic fiber yarns, to be a bag-shaped body. They include air bags for a driver's seat, for a passenger's seat and for side impact protection of a vehicle occupant.

According to the present invention, the bag-shaped body may be prepared by sewing or bonding two fabric pieces together or may be woven into a fabric and cut therefrom.

The air bag formed of two woven fabrics of the present invention may be a bag-shaped body which is manufactured by sewing two fabrics having the same weave or different weaves or one woven on a loom as a hollow weave while using a stitch yarn. If the hollow air bag is formed of the above-mentioned fabrics satisfying the conditions defined by the specified yarn, weave structure and tensile work at break, it is possible for the woven fabric to generally uniformly bear an expansion stress caused by a gas generated upon the deployment of the air bag, whereby the air bag could, as a whole, have an

extremely high mechanical resistance to an instantaneous expansion stress upon deployment.

Also, the air bag according to the present invention may be formed by sewing or bonding one or three cut
5 pieces, or more, of the above-mentioned woven fabric together to have a three-dimensional contour. The above-mentioned air bag formed by sewing or bonding one or three cut pieces, or more, of the woven fabric to have a three-dimensional contour may be the one disclosed in
10 Japanese Patent No. 2,668,332 wherein three main pieces of the fabric are cut from a woven fabric and then sewn together along the outer periphery to have a three-dimensional contour, or may be one disclosed in United States Patent No. 5,529,340 wherein a single piece is cut
15 from a woven fabric, which is patterned to have a three-dimensional contour after the cut edges thereof are sewn together.

The air bag according to the present invention is excellent in weight reduction and pliability so that a
20 favorable compactness is obtainable if the fabric is composed of yarns (warp and weft), each consisting of a plurality of filaments having a total fineness in a range from 66 to 167 decitex and a single filament fineness in a range from 1.0 to 3.3 decitex, and has the above-
25 identified tensile work at break. Also, a resistance to heat-aging, a resistance to wet heat-aging and a resistance to ozone of the air bag could be improved to a large extent if a woven fabric composed of polyamide fiber yarns containing a predetermined amount of metallic
30 copper, copper salt (copper acetate, halogenated copper, copper bromide or others), halogenated alkaline metals or mixtures of various copper salts and organic bases is used.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

35 Fig. 1 is a conceptual illustration of a sequence of behaviours of an air bag upon the inflation;

Fig. 2 is a tensile stress-strain curve of a woven

fabric constituting the air bag, for illustrating a tensile work at break thereof; and

Fig. 3 is an illustration of a method for measuring a thickness of the air bag.

5 BEST MODES FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

According to the present invention, it is necessary that an air bag is formed of a woven fabric having a tensile work at break of 7000 (N·%/2.54 cm) or more. The tensile work at break referred to in this text is defined
10 by an area encircled with a tensile stress-strain curve shown in Fig. 2 of the woven fabric of the air bag obtained by a tensile test carried out under a predetermined condition and a vertical line extending from a break point on the tensile stress-strain curve to
15 a horizontal axis (representing a tensile elongation).

With reference to Fig. 1, the tensile work at break will be explained below.

Fig. 1 is a schematic illustration of a sequence of typical behaviours of the air bag upon the collision of a
20 vehicle. Fig. 1(1) shows the air bag housed in a case 1 in a folded state before the same is actuated. When the vehicle collision occurs and a signal is transmitted from a sensor to the gas generator (inflator), a gas for inflating the air bag 2 is supplied thereinto. Then the
25 case opens as shown in Fig. 1(2) to allow the air bag to project forward (in the direction opposite to the mount). After the air bag vibrates forward and backward due to the elastic recovery of the woven fabric and the inner pressure as shown in Figs. 1(3) and 1(4), the air bag
30 expands to a maximum extent and reaches a generally stable profile. According to the actuation test for the air bag carried out at a standard collision speed, for example, defined by FMVSS208 which is a vehicle safety regulation in the United States, when the air bag reaches
35 the state shown in Fig. 1(5), the occupant 3 pushes the air bag as shown in Fig. 1(6) to exhaust gas through a vent provided in the air bag. Thus, the inertial kinetic

energy of the occupant caused by a sudden stop of the vehicle is absorbed by the air bag so that the impact is cushioned.

5 In the above sequence of the actuation of the air bag, at the stage shown in Figs. 1(5) and 1(6), a load applied to the woven fabric of the air bag is a hoop tension due to the inner pressure of the air bag wherein, assuming that the air bag is of a spherical shape, a stress (f) generated in the woven fabric is represented
10 by an equation $f = pd/4$ where p is the inner pressure and d is a diameter of the air bag, which means that the tensile strength of the woven fabric is a decisive factor for determining the tenacity of the air bag. Contrarily, at the stage shown in Fig. 1(3) wherein gas flows into
15 the air bag upon the actuation of the inflator to project the air bag forward to a maximum extent, the forward motion of the air bag ceases when the kinetic energy of the air bag itself is absorbed by the tensile work of the woven fabric. Accordingly, at this stage, the tensile
20 work at break of the woven fabric forming the air bag is more decisive than the tensile strength at break thereof.

The present inventors have analyzed the sequence of behaviours of the air bag from the stage wherein the air bag starts the inflation to the stage wherein the
25 inflated air bag absorbs the inertial kinetic motion of the vehicle occupant caused by a sudden stop of the vehicle, and found that the dynamic load applied to the air bag becomes larger at the stage shown in Fig. 1(3) wherein the air bag is supplied with gas from the
30 inflator to project forward to a maximum extent than at the stage shown in Figs. 1(5) and 1(6) wherein the air bag inflates to a maximum extent and restrains the occupant.

35 Since the kinetic energy of the air bag projected forward must be absorbed by the tensile work of the woven fabric forming the air bag at the former stage as described above, the woven fabric of the air bag

preferably has a larger tensile work.

According to the present invention, it is necessary that the tensile work at break of the woven fabric is 7000 (N·%/2.54 cm) or more, preferably
5 15000 (N·%/2.54 cm) or more, most preferably 25000 (N·%/2.54 cm) or more if the deployment at a high temperature or a safety factor is taken into consideration. If this value is less than
10 7000 (N·%/2.54 cm), there is a risk in that the air bag may be broken in the mount or the outer periphery thereof at the deployment stage of the air bag.

This tensile work is generally correlated to a basis weight of the woven fabric if a yarn kind is specified. Therefore, an unnecessarily large tensile energy at break
15 is contradictory, as a result to the weight reduction and compactness which are important requisites for the air bag. For such reasons, the air bag according to the present invention has to be formed of a woven fabric having a product of a total fineness of warp or weft
20 multiplied by a weave density (hereinafter referred to as a weave fineness) of 16000 (decitex·ends/2.54 cm) or less and a tensile work at break of 7000 (N·%/2.54 cm) or more.

Also, according to the present invention, it is
25 effective that a load at a 15% elongation is in a range from 3 to 35N·%/2.54 cm when the woven fabric is stretched. If the load at a 15% elongation is less than 3N·%/2.54 cm, the woven fabric is too rigid to obtain a pliable air bag. Contrarily, if it exceed 35N·%/2.54 cm,
30 the woven fabric is liable to be largely stretched to cause a so-called bottoming when the air bag restrains the vehicle occupant.

Since the vehicle may be used under various conditions for a long period, one of important requisites
35 for the air bag is that the performance thereof does not deteriorate even after being exposed to high temperature, moisture or ozonic. Particularly, the resistance to heat

is an important factor. Actually, automobile manufacturers regard such a fact as important as the loss of the tensile strength of the woven fabric is small after being subjected to a high temperature (in a range from 80 to 120°C) treatment for a long period (in a range from 1000 to 3000 hours).

To obtain an air bag according to the present invention light in weight and excellent in pliability and compactness, it is preferable that yarns are used for forming the woven fabric for the air bag have a total yarn fineness in a range from 66 to 167 decitex and are composed of a plurality of single filaments, each having a fineness in a range from 1.0 to 3.3 decitex. If the yarns having a total yarn fineness exceeding 167 decitex or a single filament fineness exceeding 3.3 decitex, are used, the resultant woven fabric becomes stiff and produces an air bag having poor stowability. Contrarily, yarns having a single filament fineness less than 1.0 decitex are difficult to produce and, even if it is possible, the weaving process would be troublesome. The air bag obtained from yarns having a total thickness less than 66 decitex has an inferior mechanical property such as a tensile strength or a tearing strength and may not satisfy the indispensably dynamic characteristics of the air bag indispensable upon the actuation thereof.

The woven fabric for the air bag according to the present invention preferably has substantially the same mechanical property in the warp and weft directions. The mechanical property in the weft direction, however, is sometimes inferior to that in the warp direction as a result of the treatment direction in a fabric finishing process. To solve this problem, according to the present invention, the woven fabric is preferably prepared so that a birefringence of weft is larger than that of warp, or a weave fineness in weft is larger than that in warp in the resultant fabric.

Additives for facilitating the yarn durability are

seldom added to polyamide fibers for ordinary clothing use. However, since the durability, particularly the resistance to heat is one of important requisites for the air bag as described before, yarns for the air bag according to the present invention must contain one kind or more stabilizing agents for improving the durability. The durability referred to herein includes a resistant to aging, a resistant to wet heat aging, a resistance to ozone or others.

In the present invention, woven fabrics composed of yarns containing metallic copper, copper salt (copper acetate, halogenated copper, copper bromide or others), halogenated alkaline metals or mixtures of various copper salts and organic bases as the stabilizing agents for improving the heat durability are used. These copper compounds may be added to polyamide fibers in a known manner, such as added in a polymerization process of polyamide or incorporated into polymer chips.

Yarns forming the air bag of the present invention are composed of polyamide fibers containing copper or copper compounds of 30 to 200 ppm estimated in term of copper. If the value estimated in term of copper is less than 30 ppm, there is a risk of a lack of the heat durability expected of the air bag fabric of the present invention, while if it exceeds 200 ppm, there is a risk of difficulty in the spinning process.

The air bag fabric of the present invention may be woven in any of conventional weaves including a plain weave, a rip-stop weave, a mat weave, a twill weave or others. However, a plain weave is particularly favorably used for the air bag fabric according to the present invention, because a denser weave structure is easily obtainable. The warp and weft density may be adjustable even after the weaving process through the fabric finishing process. The air bag of the present invention may be manufactured by a conventional air bag-forming method.

While constituent features of the air bag according to the present invention have been described above mainly with reference to an air bag for a driver's seat, these means and methods may be also applicable in a similar manner to that for a passenger's seat or a side impact protection air bag. This is apparent because, even though a bag structure and shape, a deployment speed and a mounting position are different from the former, the deployment kinetic energy of the air bag itself is absorbed by a tensile work of the woven fabric. The air bag may be coated with synthetic rubber or others, or may be of a so-called non-coated type.

EXAMPLES

The present invention will be described more concretely below with reference to the preferred examples and comparative examples. The definition and measurement of yarns and fabrics in the examples and comparative examples are as follows. In this respect, the specification, physical property and performance of the yarns and fabric in the example and comparative examples are described in Tables 1 and 2, respectively.

(a) Tensile Strength, Tensile Elongation at Break and Tensile Work at Break of Yarn

The yarn tensile strength and elongation at break were measured by an Autograph S-100 Type manufactured by Shimadzu Seisakusho K.K. under the condition of a grip yarn length of 20 cm and a stretching speed of 20 cm/min. The tensile work at break was an integrated value from the initiation to a breakage point in a tensile stress-strain curve obtained by this measurement divided by a measured yarn fineness and unit-converted to CN·cm/decitex.

(b) Birefringence of Yarn

The measurement was carried out by means of a polarizing microscope of the XTP-11 type manufactured by Nikon K.K., wherein a conventional Berek compensator method is adopted while using white light as a light

source.

(c) Tensile Strength, Tensile Elongation at Break, Tensile Work at Break and Retention of Resistance to Heat of Fabric

5 The fabric tensile strength and elongation at break were measured by an AG 1000D manufactured by Shimadzu Seisakusho K.K., under the condition of a test piece width of 2.54 cm, a fabric grip length of 0.20 cm and a stretching speed of 20 cm/min while adopting a Hubert (phonetic)-strip method. The tensile work at break was an integrated value from the initiation to a breakage point in a tensile stress-strain curve obtained by this measurement divided by the fabric grip length and unit-converted to N/%/2.54 cm. A load at 15% elongation is a load value at 15% elongation on the tensile stress-strain curve obtained by this measurement, which is then divided by 15 and unit-converted to N/%/2.54 cm. The retention of resistance to heat was calculated by dividing a tensile strength value obtained in the above manner prior to a heat treatment of the fabric (at 110°C for 1000 hours) with a value after the heat treatment.

(d) Measurement of Air Bag Thickness

25 As shown in Fig. 3(A), the air bag was first folded so that edges a and b are brought into contact with each other, and then folded so that a distance between edges c and d is equally divided. The folded air bag shown in Fig. 3(B) was placed on a flat table and loaded with a weight of 1 kg via a glass plate of 300 mm square. After 30 minutes, a thickness X was measured. The measured value is divided by an X value of an air bag in Comparative Example 4 which corresponds to a prior art one and shown in a Table.

(Example 1)

35 Polyhexamethylene adipamide chips having a relative viscosity of 60 relative to 90% formic acid were molten in an extruder type spinning machine. The chips had no titanium oxide but contained copper acetate and potassium

iodide of 1:12 in an additive ratio as a copper type heat-stabilizing agent so that copper is contained at 70 ppm in the polymer. The molten polymer was filtered and extruded from a spinneret having nozzles of 0.25 mm diameter. The extruded molten polymer was quenched and solidified into a fibrous yarn, to which is imparted an oil at 1.0% by weight. The yarn was taken up by a takeup roll and immediately thereafter passed to a hot roll for the purpose of carrying out the drawing operation between both the rolls. These steps were continuously carried out by a direct spin-draw machine. The yarn was subjected to an interlacing treatment immediately before being wound on a bobbin at a winding speed of 4000 m/min to have interlaced portions in a range from 10 to 30 points/m. The resultant polyhexamethylene adipamide yarn has a yarn fineness of 78 decitex/35 filaments, a tensile strength of 71 cN, a tensile work at break of 163 cN·cm/decitex and a birefringence of 56 Δn /1000.

Then, a greige fabric was woven from the yarns thus obtained, wherein warp was prepared by doubling two of the yarns at a twist of 200 turns/m and sizing with acrylic sizing agent, while weft is inserted into the same shedding. The greige was scoured and set to result in an air bag fabric having a weave density in warp of 95 and in weft of 93 ends/2.54 cm estimated in term of 156 decitex, a weave fineness of 14820 decitex·ends/2.54 cm both in warp and weft, and a tensile work at break in warp of 20500 and in weft of 13500N·%/2.54 cm. Two circular pieces of 648 mm for an air bag body and other two circular pieces of 230 mm diameter as an reinforcement cloth for the air bag-mount were cut from the fabric, the former being sewn together along the outer periphery thereof while added with the latter (with a sewing thread #20 by a double chain stitch) to form an air bag of 60ℓ for a driver's seat.

The air bag was compactly foldable. The deployment

test was carried out at 85°C while mounting thereto an inflator (Type 8) manufactured by Morton International, which showed that no damage occurs to the air bag.

Also, the woven fabric was subjected to a heat treatment at 110°C for 1000 hours, and thereafter the retention of strength was measured. The value obtained was 95% which means that a resistance to heat is sufficient.

(Example 2)

Yarns having a tensile strength of 63 cN/decitex and a tensile work at break of 239 cN·cm/decitex were prepared in the same manner as in Example 1. A fabric having a tensile work at break in warp of 20600 and in weft of 14500N·cm/decitex was woven from the yarns in the same manner as in Example 1.

Two circular pieces of 648 diameter were cut from the fabric, from which an air bag of 60ℓ for a driver's seat was prepared by sewing the outer periphery thereof while adding reinforcement pieces thereto in the same manner as in Example.

The air bag was compactly foldable. The deployment test was carried out at 85°C while mounting thereto an inflator (Type 8) manufactured by Morton International, which showed that no damage occurs to the air bag.

(Example 3)

Yarns having a tensile strength of 54 cN/decitex and a tensile work at break of 260 cN·cm/decitex were prepared in the same manner as in Example 1. A fabric having a tensile work at break in warp of 17500 and in weft of 13600N·cm/dTex was woven from the yarns in the same manner as in Example 1.

Two circular pieces of 648 mm diameter were cut from the fabric, from which an air bag of 60ℓ for a driver's seat was prepared by sewing the outer periphery thereof.

The air bag was compactly foldable. The deployment

test was carried out at 85°C while mounting thereto an inflator manufactured by Morton International. As a result, it was confirmed that no damage occurs to the air bag upon deployment.

5 (Example 4)

A fabric was woven from yarns prepared in Example 1 to have a weave density in warp of 90 and in weft of 98 ends/2.54 cm. This fabric was a balanced one having tensile strength in warp of 963N/2.54 cm and in weft of 983N/2.54 cm.

Two circular pieces of 648 mm diameter were cut from the fabric, from which an air bag of 60ℓ for a driver's seat was prepared by sewing the outer periphery thereof.

The air bag was compactly foldable. The deployment test was carried out at 85°C while mounting thereto an inflator (Type 8) manufactured by Morton International, which showed that no damage occurs to the air bag.

(Example 5)

Yarns having a tensile strength of 67 cN/decitex and 71 cN/decitex were prepared in the same manner as in Example 1, and a fabric having a weave density both in warp and weft of 94 ends/2.54 cm was woven therefrom, which had a balanced tensile strength both in warp and weft; i.e., that in warp being 951 and that in weft being 941N/2.54 cm.

Two circular pieces of 648 mm diameter were cut from this fabric, from which an air bag of 60ℓ for a driver's seat was prepared by sewing the outer periphery thereof in the same manner as in Example 1.

The air bag was compactly foldable. The deployment test was carried out at 85°C while mounting thereto an inflator (Type 8) manufactured by Morton International, which showed that no damage occurs to the air bag.

(Example 6)

35 Yarns were prepared in the same manner as in

Example 1. A fabric was woven from these single yarns without doubling the same so that a weaving density is 142 ends/2.54 cm both in warp and weft, a weave fineness is 11076 decitex·ends/2.54 cm and a tensile work at break is 12500N·%/2.54 cm in warp and 8000N·%/2.54 cm in weft.

Two circular pieces of 648 mm diameter were cut from the fabric, from which an air bag of 60ℓ for a driver's seat was prepared by sewing the outer periphery thereof in the same manner as in Example 1.

The air bag was compactly foldable. The deployment test was carried out at 85°C while mounting thereto an inflator manufactured by Morton International, which showed that no damage occurs to the air bag.

(Comparative Example 1)

A fabric was woven in the same manner as in Example 1 from yarns prepared in the same manner as in Example 1 except that no copper compounds were added to the polymer. A retention of a resistance to heat of this fabric was as low as 45%.

(Comparative Example 2)

A fabric was woven in the same manner as in Example 1 from yarns prepared in the same manner as in Example 1 except that copper compounds of 10 ppm estimated in term of copper were added to the polymer. A retention of a resistance to heat of this fabric was as low as 70%.

(Comparative Example 3)

Yarns having a fineness of 56 decitex were prepared in the same manner as in Example 1, and a fabric was woven from the yarns thus prepared, which had a weave density in warp of 192 and in weft of 190 ends/2.54 cm, and a tensile work at break in warp of 6000 and in weft of 5900N·%/2.54 cm.

Two circular pieces of 648 mm diameter were cut from the fabric, from which an air bag of 60ℓ for a driver's seat was prepared by sewing the outer periphery thereof

in the same manner as in the Example.

5 The air bag was compactly foldable. The deployment test carried out at 85°C while mounting thereto an inflator (Type 8) manufactured by Morton International, however, showed that the air bag was seriously damaged. (Comparative Example 4)

10 Yarns having a fineness of 233 decitex were prepared in the same manner as in Example 1, and a fabric was woven from the yarns, thus prepared, which had a weave density in warp of 78 and in weft of 75 ends/2.54 cm, and a tensile work at break in warp of 30000 and in weft of 26000N·%/2.54 cm.

15 Two circular pieces of 648 mm diameter were cut from the fabric, from which an air bag of 60ℓ for a driver's seat was prepared by sewing the outer periphery thereof in the same manner as in Example 1.

20 The deployment test carried out at 85°C while mounting thereto an inflator (Type 8) manufactured by Morton International showed that the air bag was not damaged but difficult to fold, in comparison with the air bags of Examples 1 to 6, and had a large volume in the folded state.

Table 2

Description		Comparative Example 1	Comparative Example 2	Comparative Example 3	Comparative Example 4
Polymer	Relative viscosity to formic acid	60	60	45	80
	Addition amount of titanium oxide (ppm)	0	0	0	20
	Addition amount of copper (ppm)	0	10	70	70
	Fineness of yarn (dTex)	78	78	56	233
Yarn	Number of filament	35	35	34	35
	Tensile strength (cN/dTex)	70	63	54	71
	Elongation at break (%)	22	24	37	22
	Tensile work at break (cN·cm/dTex)	163	164	268	173
Fabric	Birefringence ($\Delta N/1000$)	56	56	53	57
	Fineness of yarn (warp x weft) (dTex)	78/2 x 78/2	78/2 x 78/2	56/1 x 56/1	233/1 x 233/1
	(Total Fineness of yarn) (dTex)	156 x 156	156 x 156	56 x 56	233 x 233
	Weave density (end or picks/2.54 cm)	95 x 93	95 x 93	192 x 190	78 x 75
	Weave Fineness of yarn (dTex end/2.54 cm)	14820 x 14508	14820 x 14508	10752 x 10640	18174 x 17475
	Thickness (mm)	0.198	0.198	0.130	0.230
	Basis of Weight (g/m ²)	125	125	92	152
	Tensile strength (N/2.54 cm)	998 x 872	1000 x 871	564 x 559	1326 x 1275
	Elongation at breaks (%)	16 x 15	16 x 14	7 x 17	20 x 30
	Load at 15% elongation (N/%/2.54 cm)	35 x 26	36 x 26	25 x 25	32 x 30
	Tensile work at break (N·%/2.54 cm)	20000 x 12000	20500 x 12000	6000 x 5900	30000 x 26000
	Retention of resistance to heat (%)	48	70	-	-
Air bag	Compactness	0.81	0.81	0.70	1.00
	Result of deployment test	Broken	Broken	Broken	Not broken

CAPABILITY OF EXPLOITATION IN INDUSTRY

5 The present invention provides an air bag which is
very exceptionally light and pliable to be compactly
housed in a air bag case, having a performance necessary
and sufficient for the actuation of the air bag and
excellent in durability against aging in the long term.
The air bag according to the present invention is
suitable for all kinds of air bags for protecting a
vehicle occupant including those for a driver's seat, a
10 passenger's seat and a side impact protection which have
exceptionally light weight and good performance in use.

CLAIMS

1. An air bag formed of two woven fabrics interwoven with each other to be a bag-shaped body, each composed of polyamide type fiber yarns containing copper compounds at 30 to 200 ppm estimated in term of copper, characterized in that the fabric is structured so that a product of a total fineness of warp or weft of the fabric multiplied by a weave density of the fabric is not more than 16000 decitex·ends/2.54 cm, a load at a 15% tensile elongation is in a range from 3 to 35N·%/2.54 cm, and a tensile work at break is in a range from 7000 to 30000N·%/2.54 cm.

2. An air bag formed of a woven fabric composed of polyamide type fiber yarns containing copper compounds at 30 to 200 ppm estimated in term of copper, characterized in that the fabric has a product of a total fineness of warp or weft of the fabric multiplied by a weave density of the fabric of less than 16000 decitex·ends/2.54 cm, a load at a 15% elongation in a range from 3 to 35N·%/2.54 cm, and a tensile work at break in a range from 7000 to 30000N·%/2.54 cm, and the fabric is sewn or bonded to have a three-dimensional contour.

3. An air bag as defined by claim 1 or 2, characterized in that the product of total fineness of weft multiplied by the weave density of weft is larger than the product of total fineness of warp multiplied by the weave density of warp.

4. An air bag as defined by claim 1 or 2, characterized in that a birefringence of the weft forming the woven fabric is larger than that of the warp.

5. An air bag as defined by claim 1 or 2, characterized in that the weave is selected from a plain weave, a rip-stop weave and a mat weave.

6. An air bag as defined by claim 1, characterized in that the bag-shaped air bag is of a circular shape as seen in plan view.

7. An air bag as defined by any one of claims 1 to

6, characterized in that the yarn forming the woven
fabric has a single filament fineness in a range from 1.0
to 3.3 decitex, a total fineness in a range from 66 to
167 decitex, a tensile strength in a range from 48.5 to
5 75 cN/decitex, and a tensile work at break in a range
from 132 to 265 cN·cm/decitex.

8. An air bag as defined by any one of claims 1 to
7, characterized in that the air bag is selected from
those for a driver's seat, for a passenger's seat and for
10 side impact protection.

ABSTRACT

An air bag which is light and pliable to be compactly housed and excellent in durability against a load applied thereto, upon the actuation of air bag, and long term aging, which is formed of two woven fabrics interwoven with each other to be a bag-shaped body, each composed of polyamide type synthetic fiber yarns containing copper compounds in a range from 30 to 200 ppm estimated in term of copper or cut pieces of the fabric sewn together to be a three-dimensional shape, the fabric having a product of a total fineness of warp or weft multiplied by a weave density of 16000 decitex·ends/2.54 cm or less, a load at 15% elongation in a range from 3 to 35N·%/2.54 cm and a tensile work at break in a range from 7000 to 30000N·%/2.54 cm.

This air bag may be applicable to a driver's seat, a passenger's seat, and to side impact protection in a vehicle.

Fig. 1

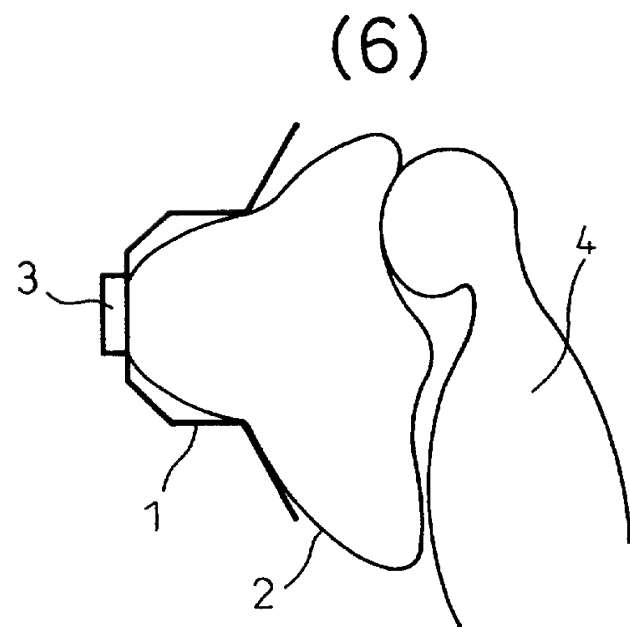
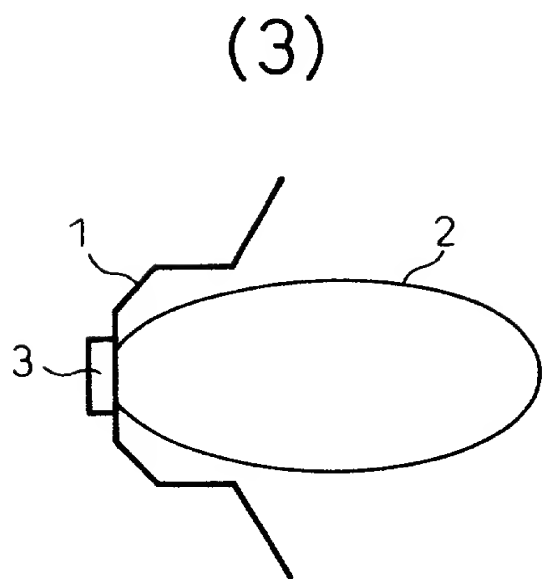
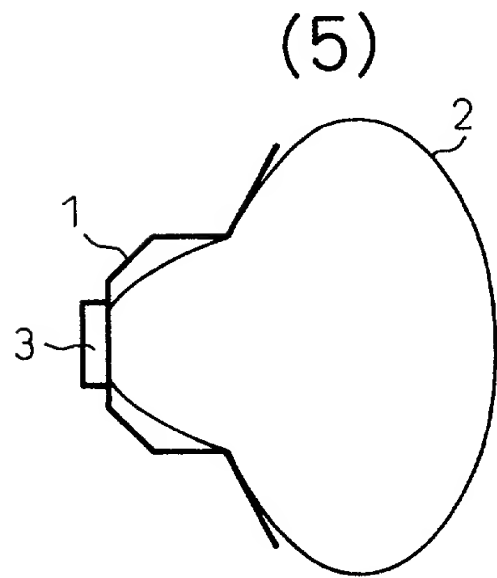
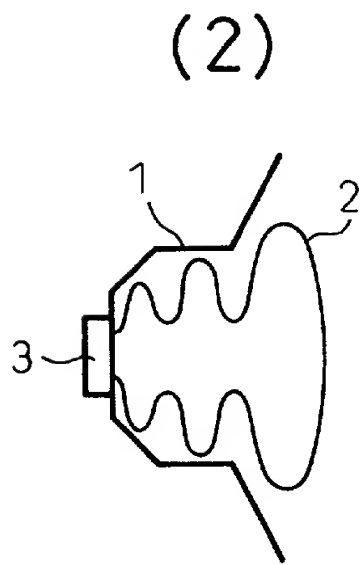
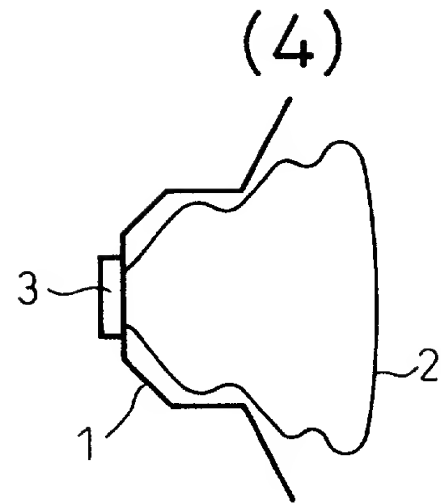
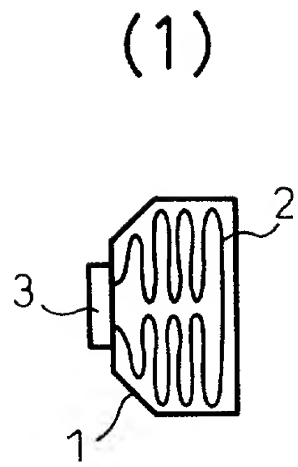


Fig. 2

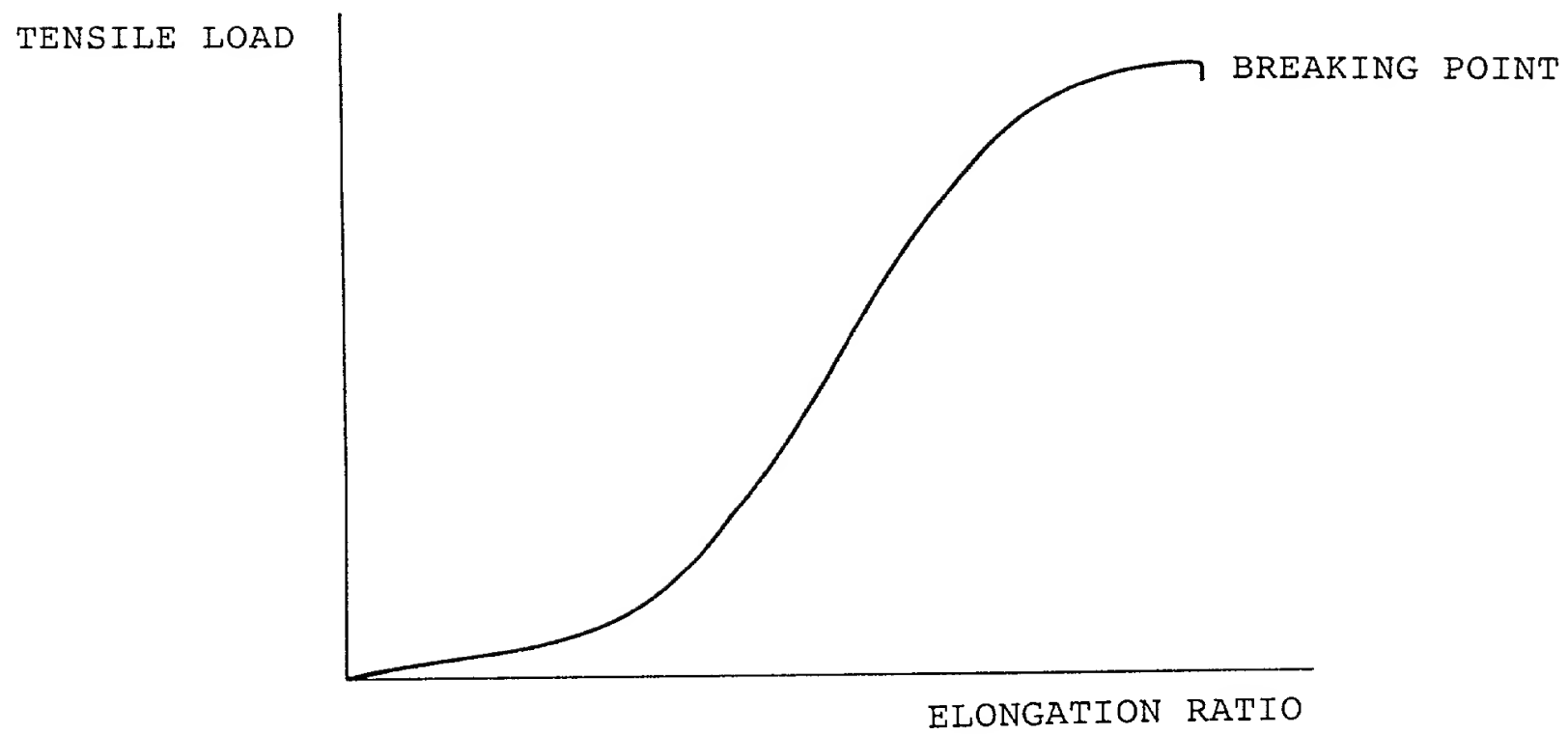
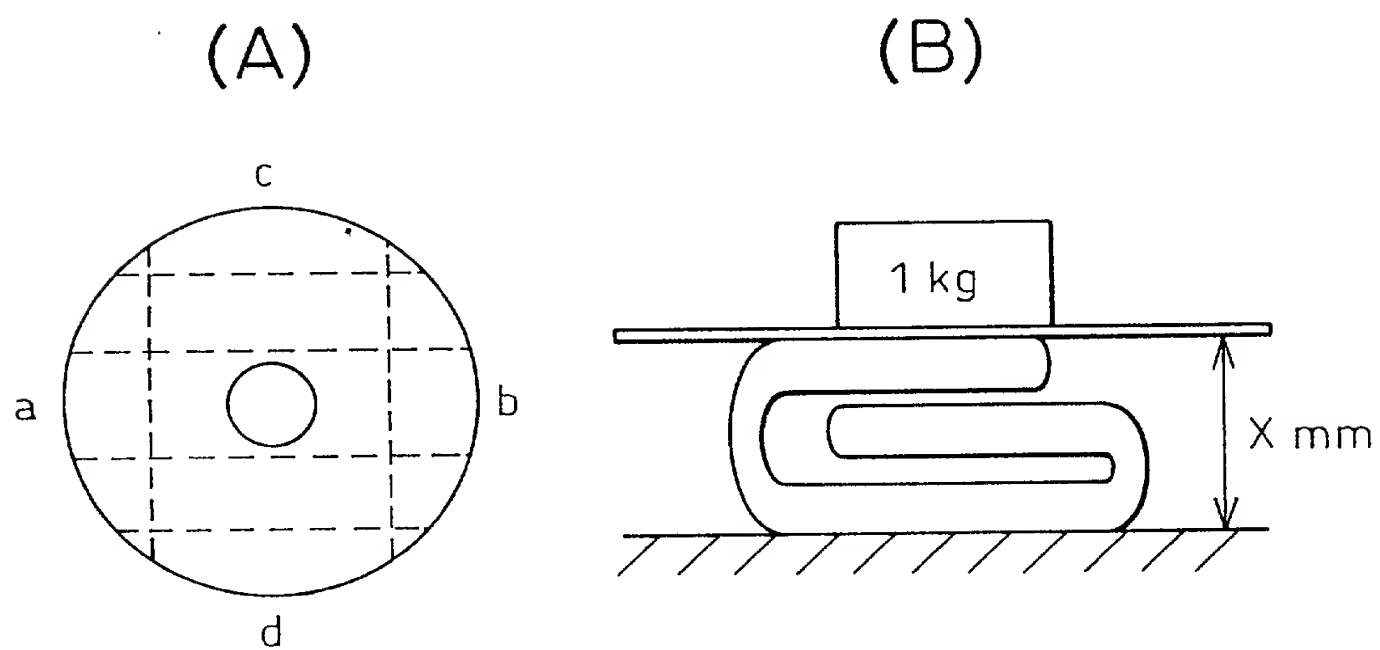


Fig. 3



Declaration and Power of Attorney For Patent Application

特許出願宣言書及び委任状

Japanese Language Declaration

日本語宣言書

下記の氏名の発明者として、私は以下の通り宣言します。

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that:

私の住所、私書箱、国籍は下記の私の氏名の後に記載された通りです。

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated next to my name.

下記の名称の発明に関して請求範囲に記載され、特許出願している発明内容について、私が最初かつ唯一の発明者（下記の氏名が一つの場合）もしくは最初かつ共同発明者であると（下記の名称が複数の場合）信じています。

I believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled

AIR BAG

上記発明の明細書（下記の欄でx印がついていない場合は、本書に添付）は、

the specification of which is attached hereto unless the following box is checked:

☐ __月__日に提出され、米国出願番号または特許協定条約国際出願番号を____とし、
(該当する場合) _____ に訂正されました。

☐ was filed on October 30, 1998
as United States Application Number or
PCT International Application Number
PCT/JP98/04944 and was amended on
_____ (if applicable).

私は、特許請求範囲を含む上記訂正後の明細書を検討し、内容を理解していることをここに表明します。

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above.

私は、連邦規則法典第37編第1条56項に定義されたとおり、特許資格の有無について重要な情報を開示する義務があることを認めます。

I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to patentability as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 1.56.

Japanese Language Declaration
(日本語宣言書)

私は、米国法典第35編119条(a)-(d)項又は365条(b)項に基づき下記の、米 国以外の国の少なくとも一カ国を指定している特許協力条約 365 (a) 項に基づき国際出願、又は外国での特許出願もしくは発明者証の出願についての外国優先権をここに主張するとともに、優先権を主張している、本出願の前に出願された特許または発明者証の外国出願を以下に、枠内をマークすることで、示しています。

Prior Foreign Application(s)

外国での先行出願

9-299861 (Pat. Appln.)

(Number)

(番号)

10-29849 (Pat. Appln.)

(Number)

(番号)

Japan

(Country)

(国名)

Japan

(Country)

(国名)

I hereby claim foreign priority under Title 35, United States Code, Section 119 (a)-(d) or 365(b) of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate, or 365(a) of any PCT International application which designated at least one country other than the United States, listed below and have also identified below, by checking the box, any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate, or PCT International application having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed.

Priority Not Claimed

優先権主張なし

31/October/1997

(Day/Month/Year Filed)

(出願年月日)

12/February/1998

(Day/Month/Year Filed)

(出願年月日)

私は、第35編米国法典119条(e)項に基づいて下記の米 国特許出願規定に記載された権利をここに主張いたします。

(Application No.)

(出願番号)

(Filing Date)

(出願日)

(Application No.)

(出願番号)

(Filing Date)

(出願日)

私は、下記の米国法典第35編120条に基づいて下記の米 国特許出願に記載された権利、又は米 国を指定している特許協力条約 365 条(c)に基づき権利をここに主張します。また、本出願の各請求範囲の内容が米国法典第35編112条第1項又は特許協力条約で規定された方法で先行する米 国特許出願に開示されていない限り、その先行米 国出願書提出日以降で本出願書の日本国内または特許協力条約国際提出日までとの期間中に入手された、連邦規則法典第37編1条56項で定義された特許資格の有無に関する重要な情報について開示義務があることを認識しています。

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, Section 120 of any United States application(s), or 365(c) of any PCT International application designating the United States, listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States or PCT International application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of Title 35, United States Code Section 112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to patentability as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 1.56 which became available between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT International filing date of application.

(Application No.)

(出願番号)

(Filing Date)

(出願日)

(Status: Patented, Pending, Abandoned)

(現況: 特許許可済、係属中、放棄済)

(Application No.)

(出願番号)

(Filing Date)

(出願日)

(Status: Patented, Pending, Abandoned)

(現況: 特許許可済、係属中、放棄済)

私は、私自身の知識に基づいて本宣言書中で私が行なう表明が真実であり、かつ私の入手した情報と私の信じることに基づき表明が全て真実であると信じていること、さらに故意になされた虚偽の表明及びそれと同等の行為は米国法典第18編第1001条に基づき、罰金または拘禁、もしくはその両方により処罰されること、そしてそのような故意による虚偽の声明を行なえば、出願した、又は既に許可された特許の有効性が失われることを認識し、よってここに上記のごとく宣誓を致します。

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

Japanese Language Declaration

委任状：私は、下記発明者として、以下の弁理士及び代理人、またはそのいずれかをここに選任し、本願の手続きを遂行すること並びにこれに関する一切の行為を米国特許商標庁に対して行うことを委任する。(代理人氏名及び登録番号を明記のこと)

POWER OF ATTORNEY: As a named inventor, I hereby appoint the following attorney(s) and/or agent(s) to prosecute this application and transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith. (list agent's name(s) and registration number(s))

FINNEGAN, HENDERSON, FARABOW, GARRETT & DUNNER, Reg. No. 22,540; Douglas B. Henderson, Reg. No. 20,291; Ford F. Farabow, Jr., Reg. No. 20,630; Arthur S. Garrett, Reg. No. 20,338; Donald R. Dunner, Reg. No. 19,073; Brian G. Brunsvold, Reg. No. 22,593; Tipton D. Jennings, IV, Reg. No. 20,645; Jerry D. Voight, Reg. No. 23,020; Laurence R. Hefter, Reg. No. 20,827; Kenneth E. Payne, Reg. No. 23,098; Herbert H. Mintz, Reg. No. 26,691; C. Larry O'Rourke, Reg. No. 26,014; Albert J. Santorelli, Reg. No. 22,610; Michael C. Eimer, Reg. No. 25,857; Richard H. Smith, Reg. No. 20,609; Stephen L. Peterson, Reg. No. 26,325; John M. Romary, Reg. No. 26,331; Bruce C. Zotter, Reg. No. 27,680; Dennis P. O'Reilly, Reg. No. 27,932; Allen M. Sokal, Reg. No. 26,695; Robert D. Bajefsky, Reg. No. 25,387; Richard L. Stroup, Reg. No. 28,478; David W. Hill, Reg. No. 28,220; Thomas L. Irving, Reg. No. 28,619; Charles E. Lipsey, Reg. No. 28,165; Thomas W. Winland, Reg. No. 27,605; Basil J. Lewis, Reg. No. 28,818; Martin I. Fuchs, Reg. No. 28,508; E. Robert Yoches, Reg. No. 30,120; Barry W. Graham, Reg. No. 29,924; Susan Haberman Griffen, Reg. No. 30,907; Richard B. Racine, Reg. No. 30,415; Thomas H. Jenkins, Reg. No. 30,857; Robert E. Converse, Jr., Reg. No. 27,432; Clair X. Mullen, Jr., Reg. No. 20,348; Christopher P. Foley, Reg. No. 31,354; John C. Paul, Reg. No. 30,413; Roger D. Taylor, Reg. No. 28,992; David M. Kelly, Reg. No. 30,953; Kenneth J. Meyers, Reg. No. 25,146; Carol P. Einaudi, Reg. No. 32,220; Walter Y. Boyd, Jr., Reg. No. 31,738; Steven M. Anzalone, Reg. No. 32,095; Jean B. Fordis, Reg. No. 32,984; Barbara C. McCurdy, Reg. No. 32,120; James K. Hammond, Reg. No. 31,964; Richard V. Burgujian, Reg. No. 31,744; J. Michael Jakes, Reg. No. 32,824; Thomas W. Banks, Reg. No. 32,719; M. Paul Barker, Reg. No. 32,013; Bryan C. Diner, Reg. No. 32,409; Christopher P. Isaac, Reg. No. 32,616; Andrew C. Sonu, Reg. No. 33,457; Dirk D. Thomas, Reg. No. 32,600

書類の送付先：

Send Correspondence to:

FINNEGAN, HENDERSON, FARABOW, GARRETT & DUNNER, L.L.P.
1300 I STREET, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3315

直通電話連絡先：(名称及び電話番号)

Direct Telephone Calls to: (name and telephone number)

ARTHUR S. GARRETT
202-408-4091

唯一のまたは第一の発明者の氏名	1-00	Full name of sole or first inventor	Yoshinori Kami
同発明者の署名	日付	Inventor's signature	Yoshinori Kami Date April 24, 2000
住所		Residence	Itabashi-ku, Tokyo, Japan JPX
国籍		Citizenship	Japanese
郵便の宛先		Post Office Address	1-4-1-704, Azusawa, Itabashi-ku, Tokyo 174-0051 Japan

第二の共同発明者の氏名 (該当する場合)	2-00	Full name of second joint inventor, if any	Hideaki Ishii
同第二発明者の署名	日付	Second inventor's signature	Hideaki Ishii Date April 24, 2000
住所		Residence	Ashiya-shi, Hyogo, Japan JPX
国籍		Citizenship	Japanese
郵便の宛先		Post Office Address	23-2-302, Yamaashiya-cho, Ashiya-shi, Hyogo 659-0082 Japan

(第三またはそれ以降の共同発明者に対しても同様な情報及び署名を提供すること。)

(Supply similar information and signature for third and subsequent joint inventors.)